

Action, its Results, Existence and Liberation Taught by the Buddha (*Kamma, Vipāka, Samsāra and Vimutti*)

As the result of listening to the Buddha's message with the noble association, the very first thing that a disciple understands is the effect of the Karmic force (actions). Every volitional action has a reaction. Understanding the Karmic force is the first step of wisdom that Buddhism points out on the path of happiness. Karma or action, that Buddhism explains, means whatever we do physically, verbally or mentally with volition. Karma, action which consists of volition always relates to its result (*Vipāka*). Every action which is related to the mind with volitions has a reaction. Every volitional action generates results in this life or in a future life. Whatever seeds we sow, we will have to reap the same type of crops. Karma theory is also of this nature. Whatever we do with volitions in the present, its result (*Vipāka*) will come to us in the future. In this situation if we are clever to live in this moment with a pure mind, we can see the fruitful results in the next moment. That is why Buddhism advises us to keep our mind always pure, calm and quiet with generosity, loving kindness, compassion and wisdom.

There are four un conjecturable subjects in Buddhism. They are Jhana (Iddhi), Buddha, World and Kamma. They can't be understood fully. To whoever conjectures about those four subjects to the end would bring madness & vexation. However, the Buddha kindly advised us to reflect on Karma and its results always as a man or a woman, lay person or monk for the wellbeing of people and for understanding life.

'I am the owner of my actions (Kamma), the inheritor, the origin, the relation and refuge of actions. Whatever actions I perform whether good or evil, I will be their inheritor. This must be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth.'

As much as we listen to what the Buddha taught, our wisdom gradually increases. The very first level of wisdom in Buddhism is the understanding of the Karmic Law (*Kammassakatā Sammāditthi*). Here we are knowledgeable about the actions, volitions and their results. Whatever we do with intention, we will receive the same results. If someone does something physically, verbally or mentally, he or she receives the same results. If someone does something with an impure mind, he will receive the evil results because of his polluted mind. Also, if someone does something with pure mind, he will receive the fruitful results. This is an eternal law which no one controls.

Birth of beings is determined according to Karmic energy. It says in the Dhammapada;

*Gabbhameke uppajjanti nirayaṃ pāpakammino,
Saggaṃ sugatino yanti parinibbanti anāsavā.* (Dhammapada-Pāpavagga)

Some are born in the womb; the wicked are born in hell; the well-conducted go to blissful states; the stainless (undefiled ones) pass into Nibbana.

Buddhism points out the path how to overcome suffering and achieve ultimate happiness that no one can change. For real happiness we have to understand the three defilements which disturb our peace of mind. They are greed, anger and ignorance. Our real happiness as well as success depends on how far we have overcome these three defilements (negative thoughts) from our mind and how far we have developed positive thoughts like generosity, loving kindness and wisdom.

Karmic results come to us according to the nature of the action. Some results of Karma come in this life, and some come in future lives according to its strength. This is a process of mind and body as well as a universal law. It occurs as a cause and effect theory. It is not god's will or any other power. It is not even the Buddha's creation. It is only a discovery by the Buddha's wisdom. Buddhism points out very clearly whether a Buddha appeared or not, this reality is forever in the world. If we are wise, we are clever to get the benefits by practicing Karmic theory in the correct way wisely. Here, knowing the Buddha's message of Karma is very important for our correct understanding.

One day a young person, **Subha** came to the Buddha and asked some questions. **"There is so much diversity in the world. Some are unwise, some are wise, some are poor, some are rich, some are beautiful, some are ugly, some live long, some die early, some are in high cast, some are in low cast, some are healthy, some are unhealthy. Lord Buddha, what is the reason for these variations?"** Here the Buddha said that **the reason for this difference is Karma, and Karma divides people as high and low.** The Buddha has explained here how Karma affects our life, and how important it is.

According to Buddhism, understanding the karmic law (*Kammassakatā Sammāditthi*) is very important in the path of liberation. When we do something with a wicked mind, we will reap the bad results. Similarly, if we do something with a pure mind, we will reap fruitful (good) results. If someone has this understanding, he or she always tries to avoid bad deeds and tries to do good as much as he or she can. We avoid bad deeds and do good deeds not only for the success of next birth but also for this life itself. With the understanding of Karmic law, we begin to know the main reason which propels (forces) our entire life.

The Buddha explained two paths; the heavenly path and the path of liberation. First of all, the Buddha emphasized the importance of practicing good (or merits) that assures heavenly rebirths. The big challenge in front of us is the possibility of going to hell after death. Therefore the Buddha kindly pointed out how to avoid hell. We have to try not to do evil and do good to get rid of hell. Why do we abstain from doing evil? Evil is a synonym for suffering. By doing evil we create suffering in our life. It disturbs our success. That is why we should try to overcome evil. Also, while doing good, we generate positive thoughts which brings happiness and success in our life. Practicing merit means generating happiness.

If we wish others discomfort and evil, as the results of these negative thoughts, same evil and discomfort come to us. On the other hand, when we always wish others' success and comfort, and develop benevolence to others, the same results come to our life bringing happiness.

Although we see the results throughout our life according to karmic energy, it doesn't mean that we have a permanent soul or an everlasting mind. Buddhism explains that the Karma theory is also subject to impermanence. Our mind which controls our physical body always changes too. It has no permanent existence. Every thought arises and ceases at the moment according to the conditions. When conditions are together, a thought arises. Also, when those conditions cease, the thought also ceases. The especial thing is that the mind or a thought doesn't arise alone. If a thought arises, other four things are with it. If we have any experience through our senses, five aggregates arise together. Five aggregates are forms (*Rupa* -රූප), feelings (*Vedanā*-වේදනා), perception (*Saññā*-සංකල්පනා), mental formations (*Sankhāra*-සංඛාර) and mind (*Viññāna*-විඤ්ඤාණ). These five aggregates arise together at the moment when the conditions are together, and they cease instantly when the conditions separate. These five things appear behind any kind of experiences in our life, but they are invisible, and have to be known with insight.

The nature of these five aggregates is arising and ceasing. At the moment of ceasing, everything ceases without leaving anything remaining. The most valuable and interesting explanation in Buddhism is impermanence. It is said in Buddhism; Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence. (*Ahuvā sambhutam hutvā na bhavissati*). This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism explains. Suffering arises because of the delusion that we think our experience was there before we experienced it, and also it remains after the experience. If we are able to overcome this ignorance reflecting on impermanence of the five aggregates, we can gradually overcome suffering and defilements as well.

According to Buddhism, we can see an action or karma, also we can see a reaction or result (*Vipāka*), but there is no certain person who undergoes. Every thought arises and ceases at the moment. However every thought ceases at the moment conditioning next thought which arises next moment. First thought influences next thought, but first thought doesn't go to next thought. Our long Sansaric journey as well as this entire life exists in this way. According to conventional truth in Buddhism, we have a very long Sansaric process. Our previous actions, that we did a long time ago, can affect this life. Nevertheless, we only have thoughts occurring at the moment according to the ultimate truth. This is the nature of the impermanence that Buddhism explains. This is the wonder of our life whether we like or not. This is the reality of life whether we know or not. This is the world truth that nobody controls. This is a non-self-Karmic process. There is only pure process depending on cause and effect (the dependent origination).

There are four kinds of Kammas (actions) according to the Kamma Sutta.

- i. There is a Kamma (Action) that is black which causes black results.

(Atthi Bhikkhave kammam kaṇham kaṇha-vipākam)

- ii. There is a Kamma that is white which causes white results.

(Atthi Bhikkhave kammam sukkaṃ sukka-vipākam)

iii. There is a Kamma that is black & white which causes black & white results.

(Atthi Bhikkhave kammam kaṇha-sukkaṃ kaṇha-sukka-vipākaṃ)

iv. There is a Kamma that is neither black nor white which causes neither black nor white results which conduce to the destruction of actions

(Atthi Bhikkhave kammam akaṇha-asukkaṃ akaṇha-asukka-vipākaṃ kammakkhayāya samvattati)

(Dutiyakamma Sutta, AN,4 nipata)

The black or evil Karmas which we do with a wicked mind physically, verbally or mentally, produce black results. According to black Karmas, we are born in the four hells, and we have to suffer for a long time. White or wholesome Karmas we do with a pure mind as merits physically, verbally or mentally, cause white results. As the result of good karma or merit, we can be born in the heavenly or brahma realm for a long time with luxurious comforts. Further, as the results of Karmas that are black & white which produce black & white results, we are born in human realm where we experience a mixture of good and bad results. These first three actions no matter whether they are black (evil) or white (wholesomeness) depend on ignorance. As the result of good actions, we are able to be born in a blissful life in the human realm, heavenly realm or brahma realm. However, we are still not away from existence in the sansaric circle since in this level mental formations arise because of ignorance. Through ignorance are conditioned volitional actions or kamma-formations (*Avijjā paccayā samkhārā*). Therefore, we are unable to get rid of aging, death and rebirth in these levels. When the Buddha appeared in the world, though some people had realized the karmic law and though they could have achieved the brahma realm maximumly, they were unable to get rid of existence. After the Buddha attained enlightenment, the Buddha realized another stage of action which overcomes the existence of Samsara.

At the beginning of our spiritual path, we have to overcome evil thoughts which bring us suffering. In the second step, we have to do good as generosity, virtue and meditation. Having a lot of merit as practicing good helps us to live with a lot of facilities in a blissful life like human, heavenly or brahma realms. Conversely, Buddhism always encourages us to do Karmas which cause us to overcome the Sansaric journey.

When a person does some actions volitionally which cause us to end the Sansaric existence, those actions are neither black nor white. Further, after a person is enlightened, his actions are also neither black nor white because it doesn't bring good or bad results. Actions which help us to overcome the existence are highly praised in Buddhism.

To overcome the Kamma and its result the Buddha proclaims the path which is the Noble Eightfold Path. In the Sammāditti sutta (M.N.), the Buddha very clearly explains the importance of understanding the Noble Eightfold Path to overcome the Sansāric circle. In short, the Buddha concludes those eight steps into two which are the tranquility (*Samatha*) and the insight (*Vipassanā*) meditation in Abhiññā Sutta (AN). The purpose of tranquility meditation is to keep focusing our mind in a particular wholesome thought such as breathing or loving kindness. When we practice our mind

again and again using some kinds of meditation techniques, we can concentrate our mind for a long time without defilements such as desire or anger. As a result, we gain peace of mind and purification of mind that causes our happiness. If we can focus on impermanence with concentrated mind, arising and ceasing of five aggregates, this is the insight meditation which is unique only to Buddhism and it differs from all other religions and teachings. Both tranquility and insight meditations are very important for the purification our mind. If someone practices according to this message, he or she is able to get rid of all kinds of pain, sorrow and lamentation.

Understanding the four noble truths, the dependent origination and the five aggregates are interrelated. Here understanding the five aggregates {forms (*Rupa*), feelings (*Vedanā*), perception (*Saññā*), mental formations (*Sankhāra*) and consciousness (*Viññāna*)} plays a main role.

We usually experience the world through our senses such as eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. When objects such as forms, sounds, smell, taste, touch and mental formations reach our senses, we experience the world. According to the conventional truth, though we don't experience, there is a world which consists of four elements; earth, water, fire and air. However, according to the ultimate (absolute) truth the world is alive when we experience the world. The world means arising of the five aggregates. If we don't experience the world through our senses, there is no world. That experiential world which differs from moment to moment is also alive according to our present mental condition. When we experience something through our six senses, the very first experience of arising of the five aggregates which is the result of our previous actions is instant. That very first experience is neither wholesome nor unwholesome. It, which is said as the behavior of consciousness (*Viññāna Cariya*), is just result of previous actions. Then if we are ignorant, that first experience goes to the behavior of ignorance (*Aññāna Cariya*). In this level the pure five aggregate have become the five grasping aggregates. It means above three actions; black, white, black & white have arisen. In this situation, we are in the samsaric circle since mental formations arise because of ignorance. If someone is mindful and wise reflecting on impermanence, suffering (unsatisfactoriness) and selflessness at the moment with the first experience, next experience goes to the behavior of wisdom (*Ñāna Cariya*). Then we are away from the Samsaric circle as well as suffering.

The nature of this experience is arising at the moment and ceasing instantly. Whatever we experience through six senses, five aggregates arise at that moment. Also, they immediately cease. Five aggregates are forms (*Rupa*), feelings (*Vedanā*), perception (*Saññā*), mental formations (*Sankhāra*) and consciousness (*Viññāna*). These five things arise together and cease together. They cannot be divided. We learn them by intelligence. These five aggregates, six internal senses or external objects are not permanent. They arise with the conditions at the moment, and they cease immediately when conditions separate. However, because of our ignorance we think they are permanent. Only wisdom can awaken us from this delusion. The nature of all conditions is that; **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence. (*ahutvā sambhutam hutvā na bhavissatī*)**. It means if we experience something now, it didn't happen in the past in the same way like now. Also, that present experience will not go to the future in the same way as well. If someone is clever to reflect on impermanence of the five aggregates

again and again at the moment, that present thought influences next thought to see the world correctly. Then little by little ignorance which take the world permanent ceases. As the result of practicing this path continuously, one day, we are able to experience everything as impermanent. Then we don't depend on anything or anyone. Also, we can live without any defilements among the ordinary people like a lotus flower which is over mud without evil what they touch. This is the real liberation what the Buddha taught.

Let's live happily without anger among the people who are angry.

Let's live happily without mental illnesses among the people who are mentally ill.

Let's live happily without longing for sensual pleasures among those who are seeking sensual pleasures.

This is the real way to make a refuge with one's mind and the Dhamma.

**Dwell with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge;
dwell with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge.**

*Atta deepā bhikkhave viharatha atta saranā na añña saranā,
Dhamma deepā bhikkhave viharatha dhamma saranā na añña saranā.*



May the Triple Gem Bless you!

May All Beings be Mindful and Wise!

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